

As Carl ran down the court, sweat dripped off of his face. He swung left, turned right, dribbled, and shot the ball into the hoop. The ball flew, thump! The crowd roared, but Carl didn't notice. All of his thoughts and feelings were on the basketball and every move of his fellow players.

At half time, Carl sat on the bench drinking a long, cold glass of water. "We have finally made it to the playoffs," he thought, "and our year of really hard work has finally paid off." As Carl drank his water, he thought back over the past year. This was the first year for a basketball team at Westview School. The boys who had been picked for this team were excited, because they knew they were the new team for Westview School. At each game they had played during the year, Westview School was not the favored team. The other schools thought that since Westview had a new team, they would be an easy team to beat. However, the boys from Westview surprised the whole town and now were in the final games of the playoffs against Eastland School.

The buzzer rang and Carl ran out on the court, ready to play. The boys from each team ran, sweated, jumped, and scored points for their team. They pushed and shoved as they ran across the court, with their shoes squeaking at every turn. The score inched up, 92-90, Westview, then 94-92, Eastland. As the boys played, the colors and sounds from the crowd became a blur. Suddenly, the buzzer sounded. The playoff game was over, and Eastland had won: 118-116.

Carl slumped down on the bench with the rest of the boys. They were all upset that they had lost the playoff game. The coach came over and said, "Great game boys!" "What do you mean, Coach?" asked Carl. "We lost the game." "We may have lost the game," said the

coach, "but we are not a bunch of losers. To make it to the playoffs in only one year is very good and something to be proud of." The boys looked at each other and grinned. The coach was right. Westview School may not have won the game, but the boys did have plenty to be proud of!

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